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Contact:
Holley Bolen, 402-471-3888

Bruning Files Charges Against Care Giver who Duped Elderly Woman out of over \$500,000

(Lincoln, NE) Attorney General Jon Bruning filed charges yesterday against a Council Bluffs woman who allegedly duped an 87 year-old woman out of over half a million dollars. The state charged Lori Knotek with one count of Theft by Deception, a class III felony, and one count of Abuse of a Vulnerable Adult, a class IIIA felony.

Attorney General Bruning said, "This is a horrible situation. This woman took advantage of an elderly person who trusted and relied on her. Criminals who prey on vulnerable Nebraskans will be brought to justice."

Bruning continued, "I'm grateful for the hard work of the Omaha Police and Adult Protective Services. Without their dedication this case may not have been brought to light."

Knotek allegedly spent over \$500,000 of Dorothy Smith's money over four years. In 2002, she had Smith purchase a home in Council Bluffs for \$260,000 and two years later had Smith sell it to her for \$1.00. Knotek also purchased thousands of dollars of products from QVC and the Home Shopping Network. In one month alone, from March 21 to April 21 of 2005, she charged \$31,074.40 for purchases. During the four years that Knotek worked for Smith, she purchased items including an electric guitar, a plasma television, DVD burners, a poker table, and jewelry. She paid the credit card bills out of the joint checking account she and Smith held for expenses related to Smith's care.

Dorothy Smith has had difficulty hearing and talking since birth and primarily uses sign language to communicate. She suffers from dementia and had a stroke in 2001 that impaired the use of the left side of her body. She lived with her brother and sister until they passed away in 2000 and 2001. She inherited approximately \$1 million when her siblings died and hired Knotek to care for her. Smith's second cousin, Judy McDonald became suspicious of Knotek in the summer of 2005. She filed a report with the Omaha Police Department and took Smith to a nursing home in Omaha.

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